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SIPDIS
TELEGRAM

May 12, 2003

To: No Action Addressee
Action: Unknown
From: AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI (ABU DHABI 2305 - UNKNOWN)
TAGS: PREL, PGOV, PARM, MOPS
Captions: None
Subject: SCENESETTER FOR UAE AIR FORCE COMMANDER MG KHALED
AL-BUAINNAN'S VISIT TO THE U.S.
Ref: None

S E C R E T ABU DHABI 02305

SIPDIS
CXABU:
ACTION: POL
INFO: RSO AMB DCM P/M ECON

DISSEMINATION: POL
CHARGE: PROG

APPROVED: CDA:RAALBRIGHT
DRAFTED: POL:STWILLIAMS
CLEARED: A/DCM:TEWILLIAMS; USLO:CJDAVIS

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RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 9908
INFO RUEHZM/GCC COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
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RUEHTU/AMEMBASSY TUNIS 0512
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHINGTON DC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC

S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 ABU DHABI 002305

SIPDIS

DOD FOR CSAF GENERAL JUMPER, POLAD FRAZIER AND SAF/IA
WILLARD MITCHELL

STATE FOR NEA/ARP, NP AND PM

TUNIS FOR FSI MAYBURY

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/12/13
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PARM](#) [MOPS](#) [GCC](#) [TC](#)
SUBJECT: SCENESETTER FOR UAE AIR FORCE
COMMANDER MG KHALED AL-BUAINNAN'S
VISIT TO THE U.S.

REF: Abu Dhabi 1107

[1](#)1. (U) Classified by Charge Richard A. Albright for

reasons 1.5 (B) and (D).

¶2. (C) UAE Air Force Commander Major General Khaled Abdullah Al-Buainnan will visit the U.S. May 12-22. Al-Buainnan's visit presents a good opportunity for us to review our strong bilateral Air Force-to-Air Force relationship in the post-Iraq conflict era and catch-up on the myriad UAE Air Force-related procurement requests. Al-Buainnan is attending a commercial remote sensing conference in Washington and will subsequently hold meetings with officials at the Department of Defense and the Department of State. At DoD, he will see Chief of Staff of the Air Force General John Jumper, Naval International Programs Office Director RADM Newsome, and SAF/IA Deputy U/S Willard Mitchell; Al-Buainnan will see Bureau of Non-Proliferation Assistant Secretary John Wolf and Assistant Secretary for Political-Military Affairs Lincoln Bloomfield at the Department of State.

KEY FIGURE IN OUR BILAT MILITARY RELATIONSHIP

¶3. (C) MG Al-Buainnan is a key figure in our bilateral military relationship. Though nominally the Air Force Commander, Al-Buainnan in many ways serves as a key deputy and military strategist for Armed Forces Chief of Staff Muhammad bin Zayid (the de facto Defense Minister). He has adeptly navigated the often complex UAE military and political bureaucracy, garnering tremendous resources for his small but very agile Air Force, and is considered to be a shoe-in as the next Armed Forces Deputy Chief of Staff or Director of Military Intelligence.

FOCUS COUNTRY FOR THE USAF

¶4. (S) For the U.S., the UAE is quite simply "Air Force" country. The U.S. Air Force has had a footprint here since the Gulf War, primarily at Al-Dhafra Air Base in Abu Dhabi and has for some time considered the UAE to be a "focus" country for USAF activities in the region. Al-Dhafra Air Base has hosted an Operation Southern Watch refueling squadron since the early 1990s. We plussed-up with deployments of reconnaissance aircraft during Operation Enduring Freedom in 2001, including the first overseas deployment of the unmanned Global Hawk. In the run-up to Operation Iraqi Freedom, the Emiratis unquestioningly accommodated our deployment requests, hosting 20 KC-10s, 10 U-2s and one Global Hawk at Al-Dhafra. Al-Minhad Air Base in Dubai was made available at the eleventh hour to host a 21-aircraft strong C-130 wing with some 1,200 associated personnel. In the post-Iraq phase, we are exploring the possibility of maintaining a significant footprint at Al-Dhafra. The UAEG has already approved the construction of semi-permanent housing for USAF personnel at Al-Dhafra, signaling their desire for a long-term relationship. Any light Al-Buainnan's USG interlocutors could shed on our plans for a future military presence, particularly USAF plans, in the UAE would be welcome. Al-Buainnan was key in making our OEF and OIF deployments possible, agreeing to shift UAE assets and facilitating the construction of tent cities at these bases.

AIR WARFARE CENTER TO SHOWCASE MULTILATERAL TIES

¶5. (S) One of our major success stories with the Emiratis is the soon-to-be established Air Warfare Center (AWC), located at Al-Dhafra Air Base. This bilateral UAEAF-CENTAF project will, once fully

completed, offer the GCC plus two (Egypt and Jordan), the UK, France and the U.S. a state-of-the-art regional air force training center. In the post-Iraq environment, the AWC will present an ideal opportunity for the USAF to build officer-to-officer relationships with our regional and European allies. It reflects Al-Buainnan's long-term vision for the U.S. relationship with and presence in the region. Al-Buainnan displayed similar leadership skills in spearheading the Middle East Air Symposia in 2001 and 2002, both of which were held in Abu Dhabi and brought together Air Force chiefs from the GCC plus two, UK, France and the U.S. CENTAF has already deployed several officers to the AWC and will station several combat aircraft there in the months to come.

UAEAF COMMANDER SEEKS GREATER INTEROPERABILITY

16. (S) One of Al-Buainnan's greatest strengths has been his integrated approach toward long-range planning for the UAE Air Force. He has steadily built up the Air Force's asset base, advocating the purchase of new aircraft, upgrading aircraft in-stock and procuring surveillance and reconnaissance systems. At the center of Al-Buainnan's procurement philosophy is increasing interoperability with U.S. forces. Current examples include the UAE's proposed upgrade for 30 Apache helicopters from the A model to the D/LONGBOW configuration, and the potential E-2C Hawkeye Airborne Early Warning (AEW) purchase. In the releasability arena, he has expressed interest in the status of the LINK-16 6510 process. Additionally, Al-Buainnan has overall responsibility for the 80 Block 60 F-16 "Desert Falcons," the first of which rolls off the line in Texas this fall. He has overseen the UAE's ambitious F-16-related pilot training program, which has had to scale back to training 1.5 pilots per aircraft instead of the original goal of 2 per aircraft. That said, the program will in its endstate produce a pilot corps for the most sophisticated aircraft to be sold to an Arab state to date.

REMOTE SENSING PROJECT

17. (S) At the Department of State, MG Al-Buainnan, among other topics, will be discussing the UAE's desire to purchase Remote Sensing technology from the U.S. In February, Post hosted a USG interagency team which met with one of Al-Buainnan's key deputies, UAEAF COL Mahash Al-Hameli, Chief of the Space Reconnaissance Center and Director of UAEAF Intelligence (reftel). The Emiratis, citing national security requirements (read: the threat posed by Iran) and the need to ensure a dedicated data stream, desire a satellite system. From the UAE standpoint, this system would ideally entail some sort of knowledge transfer so that Emirati operators can understand the launch capabilities and trouble-shoot maintenance problems without having to rely on a foreign contractor.

ALBRIGHT